

Challenge for Next Administration—

# CAN U.S. BLOCK SOVIET BID FOR NUCLEAR SUPREMACY?

Neither détente nor arms agreements are blunting Russia's drive to shift the strategic balance against America. Needed, according to the experts: awareness—and a switch in policy to meet Moscow's threat.

Few issues in the presidential campaign will have a more profound aftereffect than the debate over the shifting Soviet-American nuclear balance.

It now is clear that the next Administration, whether headed by Gerald Ford or Jimmy Carter, will be forced into a reassessment of Russia's unparalleled strategic build-up, and the threat that it poses to American security.

Significant changes in U.S. defense planning and foreign policy are foreseen by high-ranking Government experts.

Mounting pressure for a reassessment of the Soviet threat is being generated, not by election rhetoric, but by a series of authoritative studies that have surfaced in the course of the campaign.

The studies point up these conclusions:

- The Soviet Union, contrary to past assumptions of key U.S. policy makers, is driving hard for decisive strategic superiority over the U.S. rather than strategic stability between the superpowers. Neither détente nor the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks have slowed that drive.

- An unprecedented Soviet deployment of powerful new missiles, now in full swing, is torpedoing Washington's basic objectives in the SALT negotiations. The Russian build-up

soon will confront America's Minuteman-missile force with a knockout threat, the very danger that the U.S. has sought to avoid through arms negotiations.

- Civil defense, written off in the U.S. in the early '60s as ineffective, is being expanded in the Soviet Union at a cost of more than a billion dollars annually. This program is designed to implement a Russian strategy aimed at fighting, and winning, a nuclear war—not simply deterring it.

The over-all picture that emerges from these studies is deeply troubling to U.S. defense planners. They fear that the strategic balance is shifting in a way that will tend to neutralize American nuclear might and encourage Russia to pursue higher-risk policies in future crises.

**"Being demolished."** The more pessimistic analysts maintain that the Soviet Union already has or soon will achieve strategic nuclear superiority over the United States. Lord Chalfont, a prominent British defense expert and former Minister of State for Disarmament, puts the argument in these words:

"I am deeply sorry if I tread on anyone's dreams, but I feel bound to draw attention to the fact that the nuclear balance, always a fragile and uncertain edifice, is being demolished before our very eyes."

Lord Chalfont explains: "The nuclear balance ceases to exist at the moment when one side believes that it has acquired the capacity to deliver an effective nuclear attack upon the other and survive the ensuing retaliation. My proposition is that the Soviet Union is resolved to acquire that capacity in the very near future."

Why the sudden concern about the effectiveness of America's policy of nuclear deterrence?

A major factor is a new assessment of Russia's civil-defense program and its impact on the strategic nuclear balance. The Central Intelligence Agency has just completed a study which, according to responsible officials, produced these findings: The Soviets have upgraded the importance of their program since the first Strategic Arms Limitation Agreement was signed in 1972. They recently have shifted the emphasis from mass evacuation of cities to the construction of shelters in urban areas to protect key Government and industrial personnel in a nuclear attack. And they are devoting increasing resources to this effort.

Further details are brought to light in a study of what is described as the "Soviet war-survival program" by Leon Gouré, a civil-defense expert at the University of Miami's Center for Advanced International Studies. His conclusions:

The Soviets are spending about 1 billion dollars a year on civil defense and even more on schemes to disperse their industries. Russian strategists calculate that, if their program is effective, casualties in the Soviet Union could be limited to between 7 and 12 million in a nuclear exchange with the U.S. That is far below what American defense planners define as "unacceptable" damage—the level of "assured destruction" that is considered necessary to deter the Soviets from contemplating nuclear war.

Top officials at the Pentagon say that what is really important about the vast and growing civil-defense program is what it reveals about official Soviet thinking concerning nuclear war. In the words of one high-level Defense Department authority:

"We in America believe that nuclear war is unthinkable,

## SURVIVING A NUCLEAR WAR

### In Last Decade —

Russia spent \$10 billion on civil defense.

U.S. spent \$804 million on civil defense.

### This Year —

Russia is spending well over \$1 billion to build bomb shelters and upgrade other civil-defense programs.

U.S. plans to spend \$71 million on civil defense.

**AHEAD** — Kremlin's aim is to get into a position to fight a nuclear war and win, if war starts. U.S. operates on theory that nuclear war is unthinkable.

that it will mark the end of history. Not so with Soviet leaders. They certainly want to avoid nuclear war. But if it comes, they think in terms of fighting and winning it."

Until quite recently, U.S. defense planners discounted the strategic importance of Russia's civil-defense program. They were confident that America's retaliatory force, in any conceivable circumstances, could inflict "unacceptable" damage on the Soviet Union—estimated by former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara as the killing of 20 to 25 per cent of the urban population and destruction of at least half of the country's industrial capacity. As long as Kremlin leaders faced that level of devastation, it was assumed that they could not possibly contemplate nuclear war.

But the picture has changed dramatically over the past year or so, and in a way that has shattered illusions of many top Washington officials about the results of the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks and about Russia's real objectives.

What has happened is that the Soviet Union has embarked on a massive build-up of powerful new weapons that threaten the survivability of America's retaliatory force.

**Quadrupled power.** The magnitude and implications of this build-up are spelled out in a study recently issued by the Congressional Budget Office.

The Russians, according to this study, are deploying four new missiles that are as much as four times more powerful than the launchers that they are replacing and are more accurate. Also, these missiles are armed with MIRV's, multiple independently targeted warheads.

This development, the congressional report indicates, defeats the two primary American objectives in the SALT negotiations. One is to stabilize the superpower strategic-arms competition and curb spending. The other is to prevent the Russians from acquiring the capability to cripple U.S. land-based missiles in a pre-emptive attack.

The congressional study characterizes as "unprecedented" in scope the Soviet build-up since the signing of the SALT I Agreement in May, 1972. And it reveals that the Russians in 1975 spent 100 per cent more than the U.S. for its intercontinental-attack forces.

As for the vulnerability of America's 1,000 Minuteman missiles, the Congressional Budget Office analysis came to this conclusion: "By the end of the 1970s, by pessimistic estimates, and by the early to mid-1980s, by more optimistic estimates, the Soviets are expected to be able to destroy a high percentage of the Minuteman force."

A second strategic-arms-limitation accord, on any terms that now seem feasible, would in no way diminish the "first strike" threat to these land-based missiles.

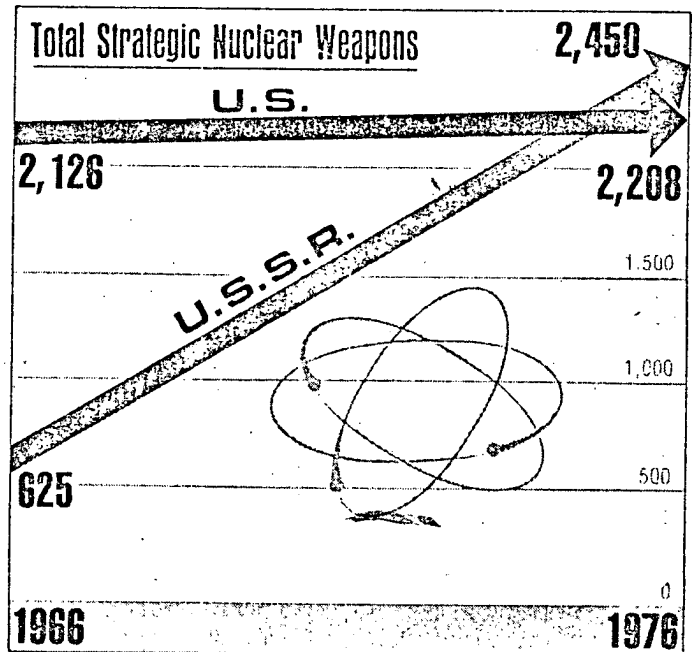
It is the combined effect of this threat plus the Soviet civil-defense program that is causing acute concern among Pentagon planners. The danger, as they see it, is not so much that Russia's leaders will rush into a nuclear war against the U.S. in the belief that they can come through with substantially less devastation than America. Rather, it is the likelihood that Kremlin decision makers will pursue higher-risk policies on the assumption that the U.S. will be the first to blink in any future eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation.

A top-level Pentagon specialist sums up the danger in these terms:

"What may be the most important but least discussed consequence of these developments is the impact on leaders, Russian and American. The Russians, with nuclear superiority, could be expected to be bolder, to take somewhat higher risks in a crisis even though basically they have a mentality that is defensive and cautious. At the same time, American leaders might be more timid, shakier, less convincing."

Some officials believe that such a psychological shift already is apparent. As evidence, they cite Soviet intervention in the Angolan civil war.

## ARMS RACE: RUSSIA'S DRIVE TO BE NO. 1



IN 1966 —	U.S. had	RUSSIA had
Land-based missiles	904	600
Submarine-launched missiles	592	125
Long-range bombers	630	208
<b>TOTAL STRATEGIC WEAPONS</b>	<b>2,126</b>	<b>625</b>

TODAY —	U.S. has	RUSSIA has
Land-based missiles	1,054	1,590
Submarine-launched missiles	658	700
Long-range bombers	498	160
<b>TOTAL STRATEGIC WEAPONS</b>	<b>2,208</b>	<b>2,450</b>

**BY ANOTHER MEASURE:** A more accurate comparison of nuclear strength, say some experts, measures throwweight — the number of pounds that missiles and bombers can carry. That yardstick gives Russia an even greater lead —

**IN 1966,** U.S. held an edge of more than 2 to 1 in throwweight.

**IN 1976,** Russia now holds a 2-to-1 advantage over the U.S.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Defense, International Institute of Strategic Studies

## NUCLEAR SUPREMACY

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was ready to send airborne troops into the Mideast in the 1973 war.

The Kremlin's strategy, in the view of American analysts, is to utilize its local military superiority in a future crisis while U.S. strategic nuclear power is paralyzed.

What does all this mean for the winner of the November presidential election? The consensus among experts in the Pentagon, State Department and CIA:

A significant shift is imperative in the policy that the U.S. has pursued toward the Soviet Union over the past five years. Détente of a sort will continue, but no longer as the centerpiece of American foreign policy. A new approach toward SALT negotiations will be required, but with no illusions about Russia's determination to achieve strategic superiority rather than stability.

Strategic experts say that the next Administration will have to consider at least four other major policy moves to counter the Soviet bid for superiority over the U.S.:

1. **Minuteman vulnerability.** Either some means will have to be developed to protect the present land-based missile force against the threat of a Soviet first strike, or a new, less-vulnerable system will have to be built. One possibility: a force of semimobile missiles that would cost an estimated 30 billion dollars. Another possibility: a switch of more missiles from land to invulnerable submarines at sea.

2. **Counterforce threat.** A greatly expanded research-and-development program is advocated by some experts to improve the accuracy and explosive power of U.S. missiles. This would include the design of a new weapon known as

MaRV, a maneuverable warhead that can be guided directly to its target. The aim: Confront Russians with a threat to their land-based missiles comparable to the threat that they pose to America's ICBM force. Also: More-accurate missiles would be designed to knock out hardened bomb shelters and thus counter the Soviet civil-defense program.

3. **Cruise missiles.** Defense experts stress the importance of exploiting this revolutionary new weapon, a superbly accurate pilotless aircraft that can be launched from a bomber, surface ship or submarine. The Russians, in the SALT II negotiations, are attempting to frustrate further development of the cruise missile, which some authorities believe would insure future U.S. strategic superiority and might even help offset Soviet conventional military superiority in Europe.

4. **China as a "semi-ally."** A move toward closer collaboration with Russia's chief enemy, Communist China—even in the military field—is regarded by ranking analysts as another option that the next Administration must weigh. They maintain that a policy aimed at cultivating Peking as a semi-ally would complicate Soviet defense planning and help deter Moscow from risky military adventures.

Whatever course the next Administration adopts to counter Russia's bid for strategic superiority, this is evident to top U.S. military planners: The President—Ford or Carter—can no longer count on SALT negotiations or a policy of détente to prevent the Russians from shifting the nuclear balance in a way that would endanger the security of the U.S.

*The article above was written by Joseph Fromm, a Deputy Editor of the magazine.*

## ATOMIC WAR— THE VIEW FROM THE KREMLIN

### MOSCOW

For the men who rule Russia, nuclear war is not completely unthinkable, just publicly undiscussible.

But Western specialists in Moscow say that this is what the Kremlin is trying to do about the "unthinkable":

- Achieve clear nuclear superiority over the U.S. in strategic weapons, and over NATO in tactical nuclear arms in Central Europe.

- Maintain a civil-defense system sufficient to survive a sizable U.S. retaliatory strike or the most damaging attack China might be able to launch.

- Foster throughout the West an attitude that nuclear war is indeed unthinkable and unacceptable by avidly promoting everything from political détente to "peace" petitions with millions of signatures demanding disarmament.

Few, if any, Soviet military objectives have had higher priority over

the past half decade than building up nuclear forces. Even the tightly controlled press has revealed the development of new, more accurate missiles to upgrade a force already more powerful than America's.

Furthermore, civil defense has been given major new emphasis since shortly after the first SALT Treaty was signed in mid-1972. Moscow observers say that simple physical evidence indicates spending is rising significantly. Higher-level officials, with bigger staffs, are involved. Films, posters, booklets and instruction materials are far more common than a few years ago.

Western analysts have pinpointed stockpiles of food, medicine and other supplies under complete control of civil-defense officials.

Lectures on what to do in the event of a nuclear attack are held regularly in schools, factories and clubs. Freshly printed evacuation-procedure notices have been spotted in Soviet factories.

There reportedly are standby plans for evacuating entire cities, but there is no indication this ever has been rehearsed. More likely, say Western observers, key officials and workers in

cities such as Moscow would take refuge in deep subway tunnels.

In general, civil defense is considered potentially more effective in Russia than in the U.S. One reason is that the cruder, less complex Soviet economy would be harder to disrupt. Also, the better-disciplined, psychologically passive population, already accustomed to a high degree of collective control, would be easier to evacuate or disperse.

Despite all this, Moscow analysts agree that the present Soviet leaders have absolutely no intention of starting an atomic war, even if they achieve the nuclear superiority they expect and are sacrificing other things for. Though this might tempt them to take some bigger risks in crisis confrontations, their overwhelming first aim is to remove any doubt about their ability to deter the U.S. in any situation.

But if nuclear war comes anyway, they intend to survive and—in their terms—"win" it.

*This report was cabled by James N. Wallace, chief of the magazine's bureau in Moscow.*